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State-Tribal Relations Committee

66th Montana Legislature

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

September 27, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Chairman Alexander:

I write on behalf of the Montana Legislature's State-Tribal Relations Committee to urge swift passage of S. 1279, the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act, which reauthorizes funding for tribal colleges through the Strengthening Institutions program (HEA Title III Part F). The funding currently expires on September 30.

There are seven tribal colleges in Montana -- the most of any state. The STRC is keenly aware of the educational opportunities these institutions provide for more than 2,600 students -- tribal and nontribal members alike -- in some of our most rural communities.

Strengthening Institutions provides critical support for tribal colleges, which use the funds for student support services, faculty development, academic curriculum, library services, classroom construction and modernization, and many other educational activities. Without these funds, tribal colleges in Montana face a reduction in services that jeopardize student success.

S. 1279 would sustain funding at current levels for two more years (FY 2021-2022). To avoid disruption of tribal college services, Congress must pass the FUTURE Act before September 30.

Majority Leader McConnell and Chairman Alexander, we exhort you to move this time-sensitive legislation forward as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Sen. Jason Small, Chair

cc: U.S. Senator Jon Tester
U.S. Senator Steve Daines
U.S. Representative Greg Gianforte
Aaniiih Nakoda College President Carole Falcon-Chandler
Blackfeet Community College President Karla Bird
Chief Dull Knife College President Richard Littlebear
Fort Peck Community College President Haven Gourneau
Little Big Horn College President David Yarlott
Salish Kootenai College President Sandra Boham
Stone Child College President Cory Sangrey-Billy